

Karcher, Platt reach PGA Junior festival

By Tom Whelan

Staff Writer

GREENWICH, Conn. — John Karcher of Wee Burn and Darien, Conn., and Margaret Platt, who plays out of Knollwood in Greenburg, will be the representatives of the Metropolitan area when the National PGA Junior Championships are contested Aug. 22-25 at Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

The Met standard bearers were determined Tuesday, when the annual two-day regional tournament which had begun with nearly 120 linksters, 17 years and younger, was concluded over the rolling 6,567-yard Tamarack Country Club. Karcher, who found himself three strokes off the lead in a three-way tie for third place at the midway, put together a final day card of 39-35 — 74 to best Frnk Bensel of White Plains and Westchester Hills by a stroke and earn the Florida junket.

Platt, who led her less populated division by five strokes at the conclusion of Monday's play, checked out at 83-81 — 164. Her consistant play completely discouraged all opposition as Platt captured the girls bracket by 20 strokes. Victorious almost as easily in the younger boys bracket (14 and under) was 13-year-old Benjamin, Fla. phenom, Keith Rick, who is playing out of Knollwood this summer.

Rick, who won't turn 14 until Sept. 5, already stands 5-foot-8 and weighs 140 pounds. The winner of the Palm Beach County Junior a month ago and the Northern Junior last week in Vermont, Rick followed his 40-34 — 74 Monday effort with a 43-41 — 84 Tuesday. His margin over runnerup Jay Crowley of Winged Foot was five strokes. It took Woodway's Chris Ohlmeyer seven extra holes to take third place away from Brian Recher of Whippoorwill in a playoff.

The shot that turned the tide for Karcher, a 17-year-old senior-to-be at Phillips Academy, was a eagle-three achieved at the 473-yard 13th with his 2-iron.

"I just was happy to turn things around," he smiled afterward. "I started the day with a couple of bad holes but kept plugging away," said Karcher, who is leaving for Alabama, Monday, to take part in the Future Masters Tournament. Runnerup Frank Benzel, a senior at Stepinac, also posted a 74 for the final day but couldn't gain on Karcher.

There was also a playoff for third place among the older males, Jerry Springer of White Plains, soon to be a senior at St. Mary High in Greenwich, besting Hicksville, L.I.'s P.J. Cowan by a stroke when he parred the first added hole. The windup was sort of an instant rebound for the Brae Burn player, who might have finished higher except for taking a bogey on his final four regulation holes.

That Cowan played at all was a bit remarkable. Last September he was felled by a soccer accident that broke his back and left him hospitalized for four months. Cowan, who sat out his senior year at Holy Trinity High, was told he'd never play golf again. He's been back on the links six weeks now, and will re-enter school this fall. "The soccer team may have to do without me, though," he laughed.